What is Claimed is:

1. A mail piece verification system for processing a mail piece in a path of travel, the mail piece having associated therewith mail piece data, the system comprising:

an incoming mail processing center for receiving the mail piece and obtaining the mail piece data;

an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and

a data center in operative communication with the incoming mail processing center and the outgoing mail processing center; and

wherein:

the incoming mail processing center uploads the mail piece data to the data center;

the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions based upon the verification check to the outgoing mail processing center; and

the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions to process the mail piece.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein:

the incoming mail processing center performs a preliminary check on the mail piece data that is different from the verification check performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

the verification check includes cryptographic calculations to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein:

the preliminary check includes a check to confirm that the mail piece data includes at least one of the following: (i) recognition of a valid meter serial number; (ii) a posting date within an acceptable range; and (iii) a valid recipient address; and

the verification check further includes a duplicate detection analysis to determine whether or not the mail piece data has been fraudulently copied.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece;

the outgoing mail processing center represents a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route; and

the data center limits the download of the instructions to the particular one of the plurality of outgoing mail processing centers.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

the system uses the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein:

the system assigns a global identification number to the mail piece that is used by the system to access the mail piece data and the instructions associated with the mail piece;

the mail piece is of a physical type; and

the mail piece data includes a postal indicium.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece;

the outgoing mail processing center represents a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route; and

the data center limits the download of the instructions to the particular one of the plurality of outgoing mail processing centers.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

the system uses the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein:

the incoming mail processing center performs a preliminary check on the mail piece data that is different from the verification check performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

the verification check includes cryptographic calculations to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein:

the preliminary check includes a check to confirm that the mail piece data includes at least one of the following: (i) recognition of a valid meter serial number; (ii) a posting date within an acceptable range; and (iii) a valid recipient address; and

the verification check further includes a duplicate detection analysis to determine whether or not the mail piece data has been fraudulently copied.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

the system uses the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein:

the incoming mail processing center performs a preliminary check on the mail piece data that is different from the verification check performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

the verification check includes cryptographic calculations to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein:

the system uses the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece;

the outgoing mail processing center represents a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route; and

the data center limits the download of the instructions to the particular one of the plurality of outgoing mail processing centers.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein:

the preliminary check includes a check to confirm that the mail piece data includes at least one of the following: (i) recognition of a valid meter serial number; (ii) a posting date within an acceptable range; and (iii) a valid recipient address; and

the verification check further includes a duplicate detection analysis to determine whether or not the mail piece data has been fraudulently copied.

15. A method of operating a mail piece verification system, the method comprising the step(s) of:

obtaining mail piece data associated with a mail piece at an incoming mail processing center;

uploading the mail piece data to a data center;

performing a verification check on the mail piece data;

downloading instructions based upon the verification check to an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in a path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and

using the instructions to process the mail piece at the outgoing mail processing center.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step(s) of:

performing a preliminary check on the mail piece data at the incoming mail processing center that is different from the verification checks performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

using cryptographic calculations during the verification check to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece; and

limiting the download of the instructions to a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

using the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data

center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step(s) of:
assigning a global identification number to the mail piece; and
using the global identification number to access the mail piece data and the instructions associated with the mail piece; and
wherein:
the mail piece is of a physical type; and
the mail piece data includes a postal indicium.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step(s) of:
within the preliminary check step, checking to confirm that the mail piece data includes at least one of the following: (i) recognition of a valid meter serial number; (ii) a posting date within an acceptable range; and (iii) a valid recipient address; and
within the verification check step, performing a duplicate detection analysis to determine whether or not the mail piece data has been fraudulently copied.

21. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step(s) of:
using the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece; and
limiting the download of the instructions to a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step(s) of:
using the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and
using the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data

center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step(s) of:

performing a preliminary check on the mail piece data at the incoming mail processing center that is different from the verification check performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

using cryptographic calculations during the verification check to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

24. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

using the service class to establish a priority for the upload of mail piece data from the incoming mail processing center to the data center and the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising the step(s) of:

performing a preliminary check on the mail piece data at the incoming mail processing center that is different from the verification check performed by the outgoing mail processing center; and

using cryptographic calculations during the verification check to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece; and

limiting the download of the instructions to a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route.

27. A method of operating a data center for processing mail piece data associated with a mail piece, the method comprising the step(s) of:

receiving the mail piece data from a remotely located incoming mail processing center;

performing a verification check on the mail piece data; and

downloading instructions based upon the verification check to an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in a path of travel from the incoming mail processing center.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step(s) of:

using cryptographic calculations during the verification check to determine whether or not the mail piece data is valid.

29. The method of claim 28, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a delivery route for the mail piece; and

limiting the download of the instructions to a particular one of a plurality of outgoing mail processing centers that corresponds to the delivery route.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step(s) of:

using the mail piece data to determine a service class for the mail piece; and

using the service class to establish a priority for the download of instructions from the data center to the outgoing mail processing center.

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step(s) of:

associating the instructions with a global identification number; and

downloading the instructions with the global identification number; and

wherein:

the mail piece is of a physical type; and

the mail piece data includes a postal indicium.